



*Maryland Department of Planning*

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*Anthony G. Brown*  
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*Richard Eberhart Hall*  
Secretary

*Matthew J. Power*  
Deputy Secretary

July 21, 2009

Ms. Brenda Dinne, Chief, Bureau of Comprehensive Planning  
Carroll County Department of Planning and Zoning  
225 North Center Street  
Westminster, MD 21157

**Re: Finksburg Corridor Plan**

Dear Ms. Dinne:

Thank you for submitting the draft Finksburg Corridor Plan to the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) for our review.

The Plan will provide the citizens a blueprint for future growth and development within the Corridor.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Jenny King at 410.767.4500 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peter G. Conrad', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Peter G. Conrad, AICP  
Director of Local Government Assistance

Enclosure: Comments on the Finksburg Corridor Plan

cc: Steve Horn, Director, Carroll County Planning & Zoning  
Jenny King, Regional Planner  
Rich Josephson, Director, Planning Services  
Rita Elliott, MDP Clearinghouse  
File



**Maryland Department of Planning  
Comments on the Draft Finksburg Corridor Plan**

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

It is understood that the Finksburg Corridor Plan is different from the draft Pathways Plan and the numerous Community Plans. However, a basic tenant of planning documents should be built around the Visions. Consideration should be given to incorporating the Visions in the document.

**Finksburg Community's Vision**

The vision statement includes the following: "The Liberty Reservoir watershed is a recreational and functional asset to the community that provides a clean water supply to the region. New residential development respects the nature of the community and its conservation ideals."

Comment:

- In the section Overall Vision for Gateway Areas Character Area Visions on page 28 the Plan discusses mixed-use development. Only one of the Character Areas, Character Area #3 – Main Street Finksburg includes residential uses. All other areas envision a mix of retail, neighborhood commercial, commercial, office, and industrial uses.
- In the section Recommended Actions: Land Use (page 30) the Plan indicates that there will be less residential development:

"Approximately 30 acres of land currently zoned Conservation have been designated for employment use. The changes related to areas currently zoned for commercial, residential, and industrial uses will not significantly alter the existing urbanization potential. These areas are already designated and zoned for some type of development. The most significant change in this respect is 27 acres surrounding a small pocket of undeveloped commercial land that are proposed to change from medium and low density residential designations to a commercial designation. The changes to the Conservation and Residential zoned land would mean that the number of potential new dwellings units on private wells and septic systems would be reduced by approximately 50-65."

There is little reference or discussion of new residential development in the Plan. Therefore, it is suggested that the sentence "New residential development respects the nature of the community and its conservation ideals." be revised to include retail, commercial, office and industrial uses.

The Plan notes that the number of potential new dwellings on private wells and septic would be reduced by approximately 50-65. While this number appears impressive it should be noted that the new land use will require a significant amount of equivalent dwelling units (EDU).

**Major Concepts & Intended Accomplishments**

The Plan calls for the removal of the Community Planning Area designation since the Finksburg area is better suited for lower intensity land use. The land use map on page 32 includes a mix of

residential densities but also includes industrial and a new boulevard district. The boulevard district, detailed in the appendix, will include uses that would not be reflective of a lower intensity land use or promote the County's agricultural preservation efforts. Consideration should be given to modifying the first paragraph on page 3 to include the proposed higher intensity uses permitted in the boulevard district and how that fits into promoting lower intensity land uses and agricultural preservation.

The Plan states: "An area at the northwestern end of the corridor was designated Employment to enhance the quality and variety of land uses in the corridor and to take advantage of Finksburg's proximity to I-795 and the Baltimore metropolitan region. It is approximately 50 acres in size." The Employment designation replaces existing multifamily and Agricultural/Forest land uses. The area is currently zoned Conservation. This change of land use is a point of concern because the proposed use has the potential to result in additional intensive use (commercial or manufacturing) acreage in the Liberty Reservoir watershed. This more intensive land use usually has relatively larger percentages of impervious surfaces and a greater potential for producing off-site nonpoint source impacts on local streams.

## **CHAPTER 2: CORRIDOR PLAN**

### **Goals**

- The first goal calls for the strengthening of the boundaries of the corridor through farmland and open space preservation. The land use map on page 32 show few parcels where this could be accomplished. The conservation areas which wraps around the northeast parcels are split by the land use with the other land use being manufacturing processing restricted. It is admirable to employ a greenbelt but consideration should be made if this can be accomplished given the land use on the remainder of the parcels in this area (northeast section). Also, directly north of this area is large parcel with manufacturing processing general as its land use with no buffer. This parcel appears to directly abut large lot residential development which would benefit from a greenbelt. Additionally, will sensitive areas be impacted by future industrial development? If so, how does the corridor plan on minimizing or mediating these impacts?
- The third goal says: "To create development that provides positive environmental impact." The Plan states on page 22: "The complexity of the issues surrounding redevelopment, point source pollution management, and overall land use in the Finksburg corridor makes it imperative that a comprehensive approach to wastewater and stormwater management be taken in this area." Numerous references that support this statement can be found throughout the Plan. It is recommended that the development of a comprehensive approach to wastewater and stormwater management be considered as an expansion of the third goal noted above.

The value of the Liberty Reservoir is clearly stated many times throughout the Plan. An issue of such importance should be included in the Finksburg Community Goals listed on page 2. The Plan discusses the value of the Liberty Reservoir in many places including the following:

- "The Plan also recognizes the sensitivity of the adjacent Liberty reservoir and the need to protect this valuable drinking water resource from the detrimental effects of high impact land uses, poor stormwater management, and outdated wastewater disposal systems, among other things." Page 3

- “The most significant physical attribute of the Finksburg community that affects the vision and planning for future growth and development is location and proximity to the Liberty Reservoir.” Page 14
- “Finksburg’s appeal for growth and development has to be balanced with the need for protection of an indispensable public water supply.” Page 20

### **Current Conditions**

The traffic volume map on page 8 would be best communicated with a table to list the ADT.

### **Analysis of Community Needs (page 19)**

It is suggested that this section of the Plan be further clarified. The first paragraph (page 19) indicates that agricultural preservation of the lands *surrounding* the Finksburg Corridor is a primary concern. However, earlier in Chapter 2 (page 5, first goal) the Plan calls for strengthening the *boundaries* of the corridor through farmland and open space preservation. It is suggested that there be a discussion of how agricultural preservation can be accomplished not only in the corridor but for the lands surrounding the corridor. Also the last sentence states the difficulty in preserving the areas agricultural lands but the Plan does not discuss the means to address this challenge.

### **Environmental Sensitivity (pages 20-22)**

This section notes that the area is not served by public water and sewer. Aside from the Reservoir Watershed Management Agreement consideration should be made to discuss other measures that can be taken to further protect the environment. For example can this area ever be connected to a public system or are any incentives offered to property owners to upgrade its septic systems.

This section includes a portion of Section 3.6 Land-Use Planning and Zoning from the *2005 Action Strategy for the Reservoir Watersheds* which contains the following commitment items:

- “3.6(3) Baltimore and Carroll Counties will maintain the current extent of conservation and agricultural zoning in the reservoir watersheds, insofar as possible.
- “3.6(4) Baltimore and Carroll Counties will protect the reservoir watersheds by limiting insofar as possible additional urban development zoning within the reservoir watersheds.
- “3.6(5) The Baltimore County and Carroll County master land-use plans will continue to support the goals of the Reservoir Watershed Management Agreement and the commitments made in this Action Strategy.”

The Plan should discuss proposed changes in the context of the *2005 Action Strategy for the Reservoir Watersheds*.

### **Recommended Actions (starting on page 30)**

There is no discussion leading to this section about population-increases/decreases. It is suggested that the Plan include some basic discussion of the corridor’s population to inform the recommended actions.

Action 8 discusses the promotion of viewsheds to the surrounding land. Consideration should be given to explain how this can be accomplished with the proposed industrial land uses at the corridor's edges.

### **Character Area Visions (page 28)**

The 4 Character Areas discussed on page 28 should be planned comprehensively to create compact, visually appealing development while minimizing environmental impacts to surrounding lands. A master plan approach to development should result in better community design (via design guidelines as noted in the appendix) and a cleaner Liberty Reservoir.

### **Transportation**

MDP supports the Plan to complete an access management study for the MD 140 corridor including the intersection of the MD 140 and MD 91. Also, MDP recommends to manage land developments along the MD 140 corridor and to develop a well planned local roadway network with frontage roads or rear roads to alleviate MD 140 traffic pressure. The Plan includes good recommended actions to address such issues.

MDP also strongly supports to transform MD 140 into a controlled access roadway. In working with the Maryland State Highway Administration, the County should address strategies supporting consolidation of access points onto MD 140. Developing an intersection control plan that limits left turning movements onto MD 140 would be another good strategy to address traffic safety and circulation along MD 140.

Page 38: Not only new developments but also existing residential communities should have sidewalks that connect between neighborhoods and commercial/activity centers. The Plan should discuss the improvement timeframes and funding sources for the proposed pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Page 39 discusses the vehicle speed limit reductions. What is the current limit and what is proposed?

### **Fiscal Implications: Land Use**

Number 8 (bottom of page 46, top of 47) references a "project" that needs more development. It is suggested that the language be clarified so that it is not implied that there is only one project.